

The NORTH QUEENSLAND NATURALIST CAIRNS

Journal of

NORTH QUEENSLAND NATURALISTS CLUB
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Founder President: The late Dr. HUGO FLECKER
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OBJECTS: The furtherance of the study of the various branches of Natural History and the preservation of our heritage of indigenous fauna and flora.

MEETINGS: Second Tuesday of each month at Cairns Education Centre, Cnr. Morehead and Lazarus Sts., Bungalow, 8.00 p.m.

FIELDS DAYS: Sunday before meeting. Notice of place and time given in "Cairns Post".

Club Officers

President	Mr. Ted Bill
Hon. Secretary	Mrs. Edna Barker
Hon. Treasurer	Mrs. Dawn Magary
Hon. Editor	Mr. Les Francis

58th YEAR No. 191

December, 1990

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Bird Sightings near Yungaburra

Ben Constable

Since Tinaroo Dam filled in April 1990 the number of individuals and variety of species of duck on this arm of the lake have decreased considerably, the result I believe of the wide spread rains that have provided them with an unlimited feeding range. Black Duck are as always well represented, but apart from them there are only small groups of White Pigmy Geese, *Nettapus coromandelianus* and rare visits by a pair of Green Pigmy Geese, *Nettapus pulchellus* and the occasional small flock (100+) of Plumed Duck, that settle here only when they are disturbed from other areas of the lake at week-ends.

While Plumed, Large and Little Egret, *Egretta intermedia*, *E. alba*, *E. garzetta* are to be seen in limited numbers along the waters edge; as many as 130 Cattle Egrets, *Ardeola ibis* at times feed amongst the local dairy herd. On the 9/8/90 a pair of Japanese Snip, *Gallinago hardwickii* were flushed from a marshy area near the lake, the same day on which the first arrivals were sighted last year.

Early in the year four families of Brown Quail, *Coturnix ypsilophorus* were attracted to the seed put out for the finches, so when the 26 chicks plus the parents all turned up at feeding time, the lawn resembled a free range poultry farm! These Quail in turn attracted the attention of a Spotted Harrier, *Circus assimilis* that frequents the area, and it took to coursing amongst the fruit trees in the garden in its search for victims, only once with success as far as I am aware. Once when I stepped suddenly from beneath the patio I nearly collided with this large raptor as it glided low over the lawn, the near miss giving both of us a nasty shock.

One afternoon in June a Peaceful Dove, *Geopelia striata* flew into the house wall close to me, and as it fell to the ground its pursuer, a Collared Sparrow Hawk, *Accipiter cirrhocephalus* narrowly avoided the same fate but quickly recovered and chased the dove as it flew in panic across the vacant block next door, only for both of them to crash into the window of a house farther up the road. The Hawk obviously dazed, began circling to locate its victim in the grass when two small children ran around the corner of the house and being confronted by what was to them a very large bird flying directly at them, flung themselves to the ground in the belief they were being attacked. The Hawk must have decided it just wasn't its day and left the scene as speedily as possible. It was a most exciting incident for all concerned except the unfortunate dove that died as a result of shock, a broken neck or a combination of both!

What I had thought or had hoped might have been a Grey Falcon and is in fact a Grey Goshawk, *Accipiter novaehollandiae* has returned after a two year absence to be seen on occasions sitting on power lines on the Atherton Road outside of Yungaburra north Queensland.

Encounter with a Bettong, *Bettongia penicillata*

Derna Elsdon

It was one of those beautiful Sundays when you were glad to be alive. We'd packed a picnic lunch and headed off bound for Davies Creek National Park near Mareeba north Queensland. We wondered if we might have to leave the car at the picnic area and walk the rest of the way up to the falls (as we had done the year before) but, lo and behold the road was open and in good condition.

We walked the circuit track by the falls and along the creek - lots of birds, lots of blossom.

After morning coffee we decided to carry on along the road. Here the road surface hadn't received any attention but by taking it easy we made steady progress for some kilometres until we came to a creek crossed by a wooden bridge. It looked an interesting spot and an ideal place to have lunch.

While eating our lunch an old Land-Rover crossed the bridge, the occupants gave us a friendly wave and continued on.

Our meal over we explored the rocky banks of the creek and then decided to walk further along the road, our progress being frequently interrupted by Scarlet and Yellow Face Honeyeaters and Scaly-Breasted Lorikeets all doing justice to the masses of blooms on the red and yellow Melaleucas and tall flowering gums.

We stopped to observe a very beautifully coloured yellow-bellied green tree snake - he seemed just as curious as we were.

The flowering gums gave way to Casuarinas. The birds became Northern Yellow Robins. It was then we discovered the "trap".

Half hidden in the long grass at first we thought it was a super-market trolley lying on its side. Closer inspection revealed that although it was empty it had goodies waiting to tempt some poor little creature - goodies such as peanut butter sandwiches and pieces of apple.

Our hackles started to rise - What was going on? Who would do such a thing? The most puzzling aspect was "if someone was up to no good, why didn't they hide the trap from view?" We decided to stay in the area and keep an eye on that trap.

In due course the old Land-Rover came into view moving slowly along, stopping now and then to let someone make short journeys into the scrub. Ha! Bet we know what they were doing - They must have other traps.

We were going to get to the bottom of this. As they came up to where we were we could see that a man drove the vehicle and it was a woman who was making the short trips into the bush.

"Lovely day", she called out. We agreed. Now it was our turn.

"Are they your traps?"

"Yes"

"What are you after?"

"Brush Tailed Bettong - perhaps I should explain. This is John Winter, freelance zoologist, and I am Helen, chief assistant."

Relief! all was revealed.

They told us that they were working on a grant from National Parks and Wildlife Service and World Wildlife Australia and were indeed almost at the end of their current study. They hoped to be able to continue if further funds can be found. They had been working their way up from Townsville and this area was by far the most rewarding they had experienced. The first day (they were to be in the field for five days) produced nine Brush Tailed Bettongs and Helen said they would have been pleased with nine overall, no wonder they were so ecstatic.

They had three lines with something like nine traps to each line. This was the last line for the day with three more traps to check.

Would we like to watch? Would we ever!

They drove on and we walked along behind. Helen did her next inspection and then called out, "We have another one here." We were thrilled. This was to be our first (and probably last) sighting of a Brush Tailed Bettong.

John grabbed a white calico bag and went into the bush to the trap. He soon had the little creature in the bag and then he set about collecting any droppings he could find. He explained that they were sent down south to be analysed and that the results would prove helpful in the further understanding of what Bettongs diet consisted. It was known that they ate grass roots (and peanut butter and apple when available) but not much else was known. Such information was crucial when having to ascertain whether certain areas were capable of sustaining any great numbers of Bettongs.

We all went back to the Land-Rover. Here the weighing, measuring and banding was done and all information entered into what looked like a very thick file. It was discovered that this little chap had already gone through this process two days ago (at another trap some distance down the road) so he didn't have to succumb a second time.

We got to wondering if he'd developed a taste for peanut butter? Helen remarked that perhaps he was just plain hungry.

John eased the bag up over the little fellows' body until just his head was covered. This way we could look at him and he would remain calm. His back was a lovely pale grey colour and the belly fur was white. His grey tail was quite long and ended in a little black brush. John showed us the little grooming claw (like a double claw really) the Bettong uses to extract burrs and which it would soon use for another purpose.

The little Bettong now had two small reels of cotton stuck to its chest with super glue. Each reel contained 250 metres of cotton. The idea being that hopefully, when it was released it would return to its nest. Previously when only one reel was used the cotton ran out before the nest was reached. All this was part of ascertaining how far Bettongs will travel for food.

Helen explained that the Bettong would use its grooming claw to get rid of any remaining cotton and glue.

Now it was ready for releasing. Off came the bag - our first good view. It was lovely. Big bright eyes looking all around. John let it go. It sat up, looking just like a miniature kangaroo with its little front paws held close to its chest. It was off. Away it bounded, into the long grass, jumping high - then was gone, just a little thread of cotton showing the way it went. John and Helen would take up the trail in about half an hour, in the mean time there were still

two more traps to check.

Helen very kindly suggested that if we were still around perhaps we might like to follow the cotton trail with them? (You bet we'd still be around; we weren't going to miss this for worlds.)

The last two traps were empty.

Helen took up the cotton trail and we all followed silently in single file. The thread told the story of a little frightened animal trying to reach its nest and alternating high jumps over the long grass with scurries through the stalks below, and all the while leaving its tell-tail trail behind. Once it came upon a dead branch fallen from a Casuarina and half hidden in the grass, and here it must have been caused some anxiety because the thread was caught on twiglets high and low.

Our sleuth took up the trail again and after allowing her a little space we followed. She made steady progress for a while but then stopped, looking this way and that. "Trouble?" John called quietly. "Yes, I've lost the trail" came the equally quiet reply. Suddenly there was an eruption from the grass beside her feet and away went our little friend. It stopped two or three times as if reluctant to leave, but then thought better of it and disappeared.

Helen beckoned us over and there was the reason for the Bettongs reluctance to leave - it had actually been in its nest. It was beautifully woven from the long grass and unless one was looking for it quite easy to pass by completely unnoticed.

As we made our way back to the road Helen told us a little about the Brush Tailed Bettong. Each one makes his or her own nest and the nests are not shared. When the female gives birth the young makes its own way up to the pouch in the same way as a young kangaroo. The female has only four teats but only one teat is used by any one baby. However, there are times when two teats can be in use simultaneously. Helen and John have observed a mother with a baby in the pouch and a young one at her side. In this case, two teats were in use with one being very much larger to accommodate the toddler.

By this time we had reached the road and the old Land-Rover. Helen and John had observations to record and also wanted to check on the Bettong again before they left the vicinity so we reluctantly took our leave.

What a day. What an experience. Thank you, John and Helen. If only the Bettongs could appreciate what you are doing for them as we appreciated what you did for us.

Henrietta Creek, Palmerston Highway

Sybil J. Kimmins

On June 9-11 1990, The Naturalists' Club savoured the delights of the Palmerston National Park, basing their activities at Henrietta Creek Camping Ground. Despite poor light due to heavy cloud and light showers, keen bird watchers achieved a total of 49 species of birds. At the camp site, tiny Brown Warblers and Grey Fantails flitted through the trees while a flock of Wampoo Pigeons and a few Topknot Pigeons feasted on berries in the tallest trees. Spotted Catbirds made themselves known by their calls and Scrub Fowl could be heard screeching in

the night.

Walks were enjoyed along marked trails in the rainforest. The rich variety of trees included Red Tulip, *Argyrodendron* sp., Black Bean, *Castanospermum australe*, well known for its red and yellow pea shaped flowers but not in bloom in winter,

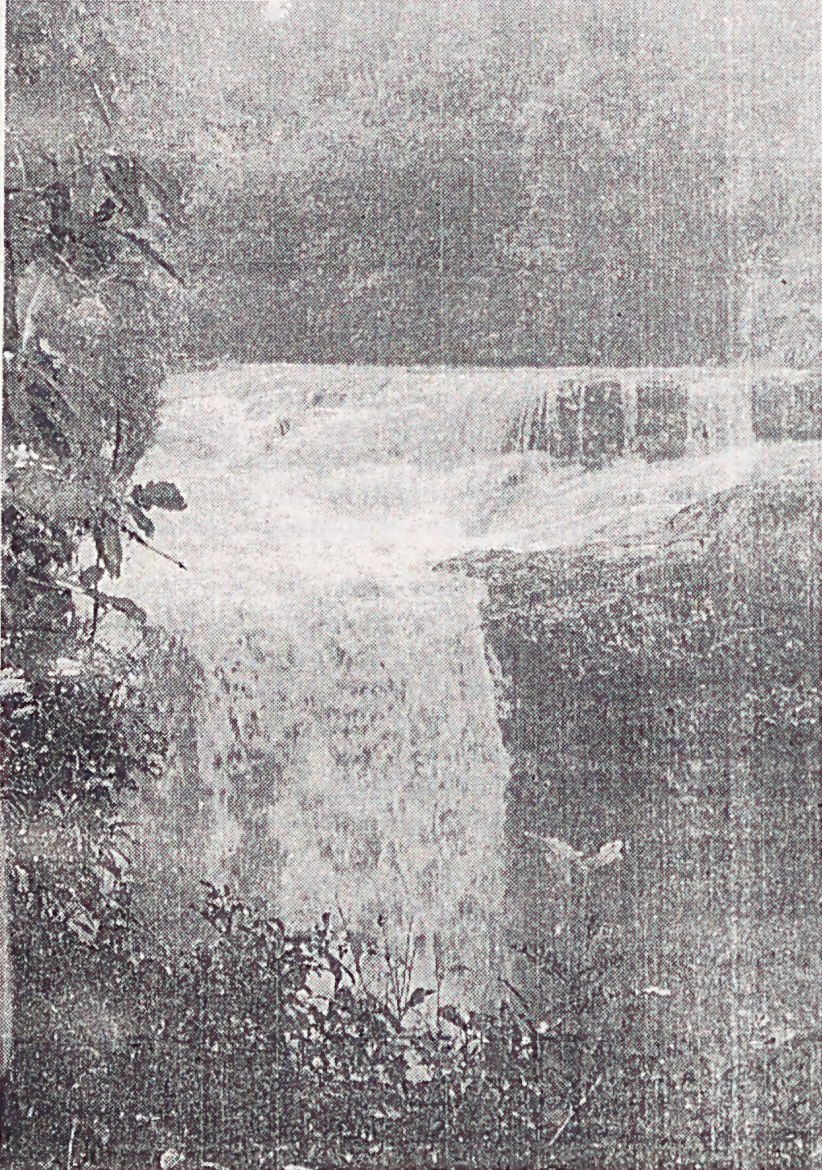
Syzygium species including *S. gustavioides*, small-leaved Myrtle, *Ptilidostigma tropicum*, Milky Pine, *Alstonia scholaris*, and Figs including *Ficus variegata* and *F. racemosa*, the cluster fig with bunches of red fruit growing from the trunk and branches.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the area was the proliferation and great variety of ferns, especially terrestrial species. Banks of *Selaginella umbrosa*, *Adiantum hispidulum*, *Tectaria muelleri*, *Blechnum* sp., *Plagiogyra* sp. and several other species lined the tracks and grew under trees. Beautiful waterfalls were admired on Henrietta Creek, Douglas Creek and Silver Creek. Near the falls, huge King Ferns, *Angioptera evecta*, spread fronds of 6m. in length. The similar but smaller Potato Fern, *Marattia salicina*, was also abundant.

A delicate white fungi spread its fern-like form over a log and colourful fungi were also seen.

The walkers considered themselves honoured to see Victoria Riflebirds displaying. A Rufous Fan-tail and Russet Breasted Flycatcher added colour to the dark trees.

Dramatic double fall



• TCHUPALLA Falls is a dramatic double waterfall on the Palmerston Highway. The highway, which winds through beautiful rainforest and into Tableland dairy country, is an enjoyable day's drive from Cairns or Innisfail. The falls can be reached by a pleasant 400m walk from the highway. Steps are cut to the lower levels of the falls, but care is needed when negotiating these, especially in wet weather. This photograph was taken in the rain, when the rainforest is at its loveliest.

On the ground lay various fruits, some orange or red, the largest 9cm. in diameter. This was the three-seeded fruit of Condo Vine, *Omphalea queenslandiae*, which is poisonous unless cooked. This is a large, uncommon, tree-top vine with a stem diameter up to 15 cm. and is of the *Euphorbiaceae* family. It is the host plant of the Day-flying Moth, *Alcides zodiaca*, a striking insect with broad bronze bands on blue-black wings with white tails. Being a high-flying insect,

it's presence often isn't noticed in the rainforest. No Platypus were seen from the viewing platform on Henrietta Creek but one was seen upstream from the highway bridge. An observant member reported seeing a Musky Rat-kangaroo. A large sleeping Python was seen beside the roadway. A bulge indicated that it had recently eaten. A dead Barking Owl was also seen on the road.

Gingers included *Alpinia modesta*; the quaint Bristle Palm was seen and two forms of *Bowenia spectabilis*, a narrow leafed and a broader leafed form. Vines caressed tree trunks; *Raphidophora australasica*, *Pothos longipes* and *Calamus australis* (Lawyer vine) were much in evidence.

The track to spectacular Tchupala Falls went along a razor-back ridge where soil was scarce and the trees were short and contorted and smothered in lichens and ferns, thanks to the spray compensating for lack of soil. On the rock face opposite the falls, Black Violet, *Boea hygroskopica* was plentiful. Cement steps led half way down to the bottom of the falls. Truly a wonderland.

Large Golden Penda trees, *Xanthostemon crythansus*, were blooming near the road at Crawfords Lookout.

Bore Pocket Road, Atherton Tableland

Sybil J. Kimins

The Naturalists Club held a well attended outing to Bore Pocket Road on Sunday, October 7th 1990. Stops were made in the dairy farming area where grassbirds, cisticolas and finches were seen and heard in the grassy verges. The call of Lewin Honeyeaters came from flowering trees while the Laughing Kookaburra's notes drifted across the undulating landscape.

At the Cathedral Fig, a huge Strangler Fig, walks were made into the rainforest which reverberated with the musical call of Whip birds. Some people were excited to see these elusive birds. Their song was a contrast to the harsh call of the Victoria Riflebirds. Some keen-eyed birdos were delighted to see a male do his mating display. A Stagemaker (Toothbilled Catbird) and his "stage" were also seen.

Three species of Cuckoo Shrike were identified, also Wompoo and Brown Pigeons, Yellow Throated Scrubwren, Grey-headed and Pale Yellow Robins, Orange Footed Scrubfowl and Golden Whistler. For the day a total of 60 species of birds were listed.

Many trees were in flower.

The final stop was made at Lake Euramoo, a small double crater lake near the site of the old logging township of Danbulla where the walking track in the rainforest was explored. A variety of waterbirds were on the lake.

Week-end at Wallaman (North Queensland)

Noela Dell

The Lannercost Range loomed ahead in the distance as our convoy of six vehicles turned west from Trebone near Ingham.

The Cairns Show holiday weekend showed great promise of fine weather for our camp in the Wallerman Falls National Park with fourteen members. The road up the range, although dirt, proved to be in reasonably good condition and we reached the camping ground in good time for a late lunch. After setting up camp I had my first encounter with a bird, for while filling my bucket at the tap a cheeky Eastern Yellow Robin settled on the picnic table near-by and proceeded to eat the crumbs left from our lunch. I'm sure he had done this many times before for he was not at all perturbed by my presence!

Stoney Creek was situated close to our camp and we made our way along the walking track towards the big rock pool where we hoped to view a platypus! Along the path there were several birds to see which included a Fantail Cuckoo and a Yellow-faced Honey-eater; both were new sightings for me. Great clumps of Basket Fern, *Drynaria rigidula* were abundant and a lovely specimen of Birds Nest Fern, *Asplenium nidus* could be seen high up in the fork of a tree. We were not disappointed when we reached the big rock pool for in this tranquil setting above some gentle rapids with a fringe of shady trees was an ideal home for the platypus. Three of these little animals entertained us for quite a while, diving and surfacing continuously. On our way back to camp we saw a Copper Laurel, also known as Native Guava, *Bolwarra eupomatia laurina* with some fruit on it.

That evening we went spotlighting along the creek without any success. On our return to camp Andrew Krumins decided to go spotlighting in his 4WD. Peter, Edna and I joined him on this trip and we took the road down to the falls look-out. Along the way there were many Banksia and Grass-trees in flower, so we had high hopes of spotting a feather tailed glider feeding! No luck unfortunately, so we retraced our tracks and were pleased to spot a Papuan Frog-mouth. Andrew took several photos of this fellow before it flew off into the night. We later spotted an animal which seemed to be feeding on the ground, we came to the conclusion that it was a Spotted Quoll.

Next morning there was a mist down low on the mountains and the birds were not very active when we set off to walk the road to the falls! Along the way we enjoyed a good variety of flora including *Banksia*, *Hibbertia*, *Dianella*, *Melastoma*, *Xanthorrhoea* and the King Orchard, *Denrobium speciosum*. Some of us had a taste of the *Xanthorrhoea* flowers which were heavy with nectar, surprisingly this nectar was not very sweet to the taste but I guess the Honey-eaters, butterflies and Gliders think it tastes pretty good! I find it interesting that *Xanthorrhoea*'s will flower only once or twice every fifty years. This is often seen to be triggered by a bush fire. The growing rate of the trunk is two to three centimetres a year. They generally reach a height of two to three metres but some varieties measure more than five metres from the ground to the top of the stem. Some of these larger specimens are thought to be more than 500 years old.

When we reached the falls look-out we were disappointed to find a thick blanket of mist shrouded the view across the deep gorge to block out the entire drop of the falls which is the highest permanent clear waterfall in Australia. By the time it reaches this point Stoney Creek has tumbled 70 metres off the Lannercost Range before the 305 metre clear fall. The creek then flows for another 18 km

before reaching the Herbert River.

Some of our party decided to make the 2 km decent to the bottom of the gorge while 6 decided only to venture a little way past the second look-out where we could see a small section of the falls at this point. We were not to be entirely disappointed by the weather for while we were sitting back at the top look-out studying a rather large leach, the blanket of mist slowly lifted a little to show us a view of the falls as if looking through a veil. The mist closed in again and this magical vision was gone as if one had only seen it in a dream! The more energetic group returned from their trek to the bottom of the gorge and gave an enthusiastic account of their adventure. Their efforts had been rewarded by a clear view of the falls from the bottom of the gorge. Later that afternoon Mal and I came back to the look-out when the mist had lifted and I was fortunate to have a clear view of the falls as it tumbled into the rocky pool below, where the water seemed to gently float back up like a puff of powder.

Our group eventually made our way back to camp for lunch, while enjoying some birdwatching along the way. Some of us spotted a brown butterfly and Dawn Magary chased after it and cleverly plopped her hat over it as it settled near-by. It was placed into a clear plastic bag and after examination we agreed this specimen was an Evening Brown. It made a hasty exit when released from its temporary prison to enjoy another day. On the road close to the camping ground we observed tracks on the embankments on each side of the road where animals, possibly wallabies exited and re-entered the bush while crossing the road.

The afternoon field trip led us over the bridge and up the old logging road. We found a track down onto the rocky banks of the creek where some Sundews were growing among the rocks. This interesting plant was *Drosera spathulata* meaning dewy blade, one of the ninety kinds of sundews in the world. Fifty-six of these are found in Australia. These carnivorous plants are known as fly paper traps for the upper surface of their leaves is covered with fine hairy tentacles tipped with sticky glands to which their prey becomes glue. They live on a mild diet of insects, and some make excellent substitutes for chemical flysprays when cultivated in the home. There were many casuarinas growing along the logging road and we sighted an abundance of King Orchids in bud growing along the branches of these trees. As we crossed the bridge on our return to camp, a Platypus was sighted swimming in the creek below and I was delighted to see another of these little creatures. He seemed to sense our presence and swam quickly away towards the bank upstream. It was a rewarding experience for me and I'm sure the others to see these unusual little animals, *Ornithorynchus anatinus*.

Later, we once again stood in awe down at the creek and also the big rock pool, while we quietly observed other Platypus swimming and also diving and surfacing continuously while feeding. They shared the pool with a little tortoise who popped its head above the surface while it surveyed its domain above the rapids.

The Platypus is scientifically classed as a monotreme, for it lays eggs and suckles its young. This unique little animal is about 40 centimetres long and weighs about one kilogram. The nesting tunnel is usually five metres into the bank of a creek or pool above the water line. This tunnel goes in an upward direction so the nesting chamber is well above the reach of flash floods. The diet consists of worms, insects, small vertebrates and the occasional yabbie. Approximately two weeks after mating the female plasters up the burrow with plugs of soil effectively closing herself in. The humidity starts rising as the nest is well lined with soaked leaves and grass. Soon the Platypus completes her paradoxical existence by laying one or two soft shelled spherical eggs about 25 millimetres in diameter. This would explain the need for high humidity, for any

hint of dryness in the air could start to dry out the eggs. It takes about two weeks for the eggs to hatch. The Platypus only leaves the nest a few times during this period to defecate, then grooms herself and comes back wet to maintain the high humidity of her nest. It will be four or five months before the young are able to leave the nest chamber to swim and find food for themselves.

Saturday evening was chilly and Arnold Magary did a grand job of setting a beautiful log fire in the fireplace of the old timber cutters shed beside our camp, where some of us enjoyed the warmth of the fire and each others company for the evening. The rest of the group set off on another spot lighting expedition with Andrew Krumins in his 4WD. They returned a couple of hours later extremely pleased with their efforts, for they had spotted a Herbert River Ringtail Possum, a Paddy Melon and heard the calls of a Sooty Owl.

Sunday morning was wet and bleak so we broke camp by 8.30 am and set off with some trepidation about the state of the road out of the park! It took our convoy 1.5 hours to traverse the 10 km out! The rain had certainly caused some sticky patches and some vehicles got into a bit of difficulty but with patience, the help of Andrews 4WD and many able bodies to give a heave-ho these problems were overcome. The rest of our journey down the range went without incident.

After a morning tea stop beside the road where we all enjoyed a spot of very active birdwatching, we travelled through Irebone and Ingham stopping in the Dalrymple State Forest near Cardwell for lunch. It was then off for a short walk. We crossed two pretty creeks along this track which is the Dalrymple Gap walking track which was used by Dalrymple up to the 1870's to cross the range. This was also a great birding place with semi-open forest. We saw a Golden Cane Orchid growing on the smooth bark of a Eucalyptus tree! A small Umbrella Tree, *Schefflera actinophylla* was seen growing in the fork of a large tree, but alas, there was a strangler fig growing in the fork also, with a root already to the ground! On the return to the carpark I spent a quiet moment at the creek crossing to enjoy the beauty of this cool tranquil place. It was a pleasant finish to a great weekend.

Breeding Frogs in Suburban Cairns

Les Francis

During the wet season last year (1990) I became a bit lazy in maintaining my above ground swimming pool and as the pool was not being used I allowed the chlorine content to fall to zero. The pool is 4 metres diameter and 0.9 metres deep containing approx 9,000 litres of water and well shaded by an Avocado tree about 5 metres tall and situated only 10 metres from an intermittent but fast flowing stream which is well covered by trees and low vegetation.

To my delight one morning after rain the pool contained a large quantity of frogs eggs. The pool was not being used for swimming so I decided to let the eggs stay and see what happened as the possibility of them being Cane Toad eggs was out of the question due to the fact that Toads would not be able to climb up the sides of the pool. Cane Toad eggs also tend to be in strings whereas Tree Frog eggs tend to be in clusters. Within a week there were thousands of tadpoles swimming about the pool. The pool was partially covered to control the growth of algae yet sufficient food was created to feed the tadpoles. No food was added to the pool by myself. Within a month some of the tadpoles had developed legs and as more eggs had been laid it was not possible to further check the ages of the

tadpoles. Within 2 months many tadpoles had metamorphosed into little frogs and left the pool. They proved to be Green Tree Frogs, *Littoria caerulea*. Pressure from the intended users of the pool caused me to transfer the remaining tadpoles to a round tub that was about a metre in diameter and 0.4 metres deep that was also shaded for most of the day by the Avocado tree as a measure to prevent the water temperature from getting too hot. As there was a much greater concentration of tadpoles in this tub than the pool it was necessary to feed them daily and change the water occasionally (weekly). I soon noticed that each time the water was changed a number of the tadpoles died and I then took care to see that the tap water when added had been standing for some time to reduce its chlorine content and after that far fewer tadpoles died on changing the water. The yellow bell shaped flowers of Tecoma, also known as Yellow Elder, *Stenolobium stans*, an introduced garden plant from the West Indies, were found to be popular with the tadpoles and consumed with great relish. They were also fed small amounts of "gold fish" food.

The remaining tadpoles that had been transferred to the tub continued to mature into froglets taking varying times but after 8 months a small number still remained without legs and these had to be abandoned.

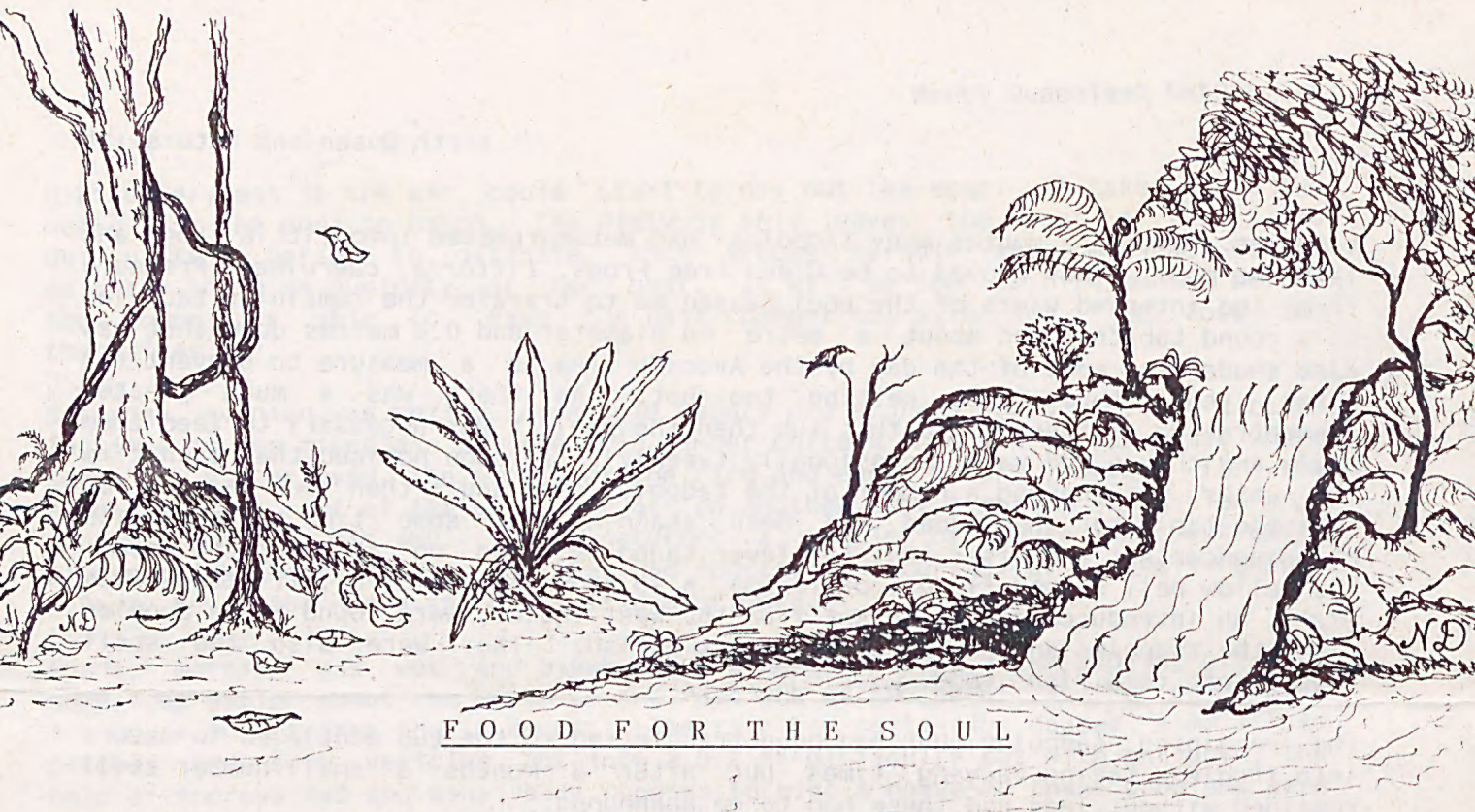
This wet season (1991) we have a plethora of Green Tree Frogs in the garden. There are 3 large full grown males of an older generation and at least 50 smaller frogs surviving as adults from last years tadpoles. From time to time Rocket Frogs, *Litoria nasuta*, are also seen in our garden.

When it rains, as it has done so much this year there is a loud frog chorus in the garden. There is an interesting variety of calls to be heard. The older frogs make a fairly rapid but low pitched "gronk, gronk, gronk" in a loud/soft sequence yet the smaller frogs all call in unison with a long drawn out "creeeek, creeeek" starting with one or two of them, then all the others gradually joining in to cause a rising crescendo culminating with all of them stopping at once after a few minutes. The combined effect is quite loud and one night I was able to make some tape recordings of the activity over and above the sound of the heavily falling rain, falling at a rate of over 25 mm per hour. When calling, the smaller frogs inflate themselves and have the appearance of a long balloon being squeezed at one end and then the other as the captive air is moved back and forth within their bodies.

In addition to our garden, the frogs can be heard calling from most of our neighbours gardens which, in previous years was not the case. The frogs have spread out so the total number of survivors is not known but the marked increase in the population of frogs over previous years is notable. In the past hole years have gone by with only very intermittent evidence of any frog occupation.

In order to give the frogs a further chance I conduct a vigorous campaign against Cane Toads, *Bufo marinus*, as these are known to eat Green Tree Frogs and other native animals. In the first week of rains 110 Cane Toads were captured and killed, the second week the count was down to 79. The weekly count for the following 5 weeks fell to 40-45 indicating that toads are moving in from other areas, all this on a small suburban block.

The young Green Tree Frogs have been seen in the pool this year laying eggs so the cycle repeats but this time we will transfer the eggs to local places of standing water around Stratford where I live and may-be other parts of Cairns whilst they are still tadpoles.



FOOD FOR THE SOUL

To walk upon a forest floor, pristine and so free!
To see a tiny shaft of sunlight as it peeps down
through a tree
Shedding its luminous light upon a delicate fern,
heavy with its spoor!
Then the stillness one hears, when a tiny leaf
crashes, upon the forest floor!

To watch in awe a waterfall, its spray a rainbow
beam,
Where green and golden pools slip over mossy rocks
to feed a crystal stream!
This timeless place where ancient rocks
and giant trees abound,
Nature weaves its intricate web of wonders all around.

What joy to see this beauty unfold, a feeling
so sublime,
Oh great forest in your milieu, may I hold your
hand in mine?
For my love of you gives life a dedicated goal!
Your mystical aura must survive, to give tranquility
to my soul.

by Noela Dell

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